

N O R T H E R N
 C A L I F O R N I A
 D X C L U B



RIMshots

DXers (and Hams)—Vanishing Species?

Do you remember your first QSO? I'll bet you do, even if it was fifty or more years ago. How did you get interested in ham radio? Many of us got sucked in after we built our first crystal set. Others started as SWLs or CBers. But—no matter how one's interest in radio was sparked—ham radio became a lifelong hobby for most of us, providing tremendous enjoyment and satisfaction.

But will DXing and ham radio survive? Along with my own middle age, the question of the survival of our beloved hobby is on my mind. Maybe that's why I keep harping on this subject; it's certainly part of the reason that I agreed to serve as an officer of the NCDXC!

No matter what radio club meeting one attends, there are too few young people. I just attended a ham meeting where the average age of the members was at least 70! At 52, I was the "kid" in the group!



An Insurance Policy for Survival: Recruit!!!!

The only way we can ensure the future of the NCDXC is to recruit new members. We need actively to recruit both Associate and Full members. We need to shed the old, long-projected image that we are so exclusive that we don't want new members unless they are at the top of the pile. Many of our current members *are* at the top of the pile. And we can be proud that our club roster is a kind of *Who's Who in the DX Community*. But that is no reason to shun new members! That is no reason to wallow in self-satisfaction.

We need to project a *new* image to the ham community: if you are interested in DX, join us! We would like to *help* you achieve your DX goals. Our collective DX experience and wisdom (?) is yours for the asking. So join us!

How Can I Recruit?

Invite your ham friends to an NCDXC meeting! Bring your spouse! At every meeting, application forms for either Associate or Full membership are available. Bring some extra forms home; if you attend meetings of other radio clubs, as many of us do, bring some forms along and let it be known that we encourage applications from anyone seriously interested in DX.

We need a volunteer to head up our recruitment effort. Will *you* consider doing this for the NCDXC? If you think you might be interested, please contact me or any other club officer or board member.

—Al Burnham, W4RIM

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NCDXC E-mail/ Packet Directory

TR, WB6TMY is starting an e-mail/packet directory for the NCDXC. He will be sending it out every month on e-mail/packet to everyone who is listed in the directory. TR hopes all members who are so equipped will provide him with a current address and keep it updated so that the

March Meet in Petaluma

The March NCDXC meeting will be jointly held with the Redwood Empire DX Association (REDXA) on Friday, March 15, in Petaluma. Our speakers will be Brad Wyatt, K6WR, and Jim Maxwell, W6CF—Pacific Division Director and Vice-Director—who will discuss current topics in the DXCC program. Relevant subjects include the Pratas and Scarborough votes, the Mt. Athos situation, prospects for other new ones, the internal split in the DXAC between the West and the East. Find out what is going on behind the scenes—as well as who is for and against various proposals.

The meeting is at Carrow's Restaurant in Petaluma. Take the Washington St. offramp from Hwy 101—Carrow's is just east of the freeway. Attitude adjustment commences at 6 PM, with dinner at 7 and the meeting at

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N O R T H E R N
C A L I F O R N I A
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Club Officers:

President: Al Burnham, W4RIM
 Vice President: Glenn Vinson, W6OTC
 Secretary: Lloyd Cabral, AA6T
 Treasurer: Stan Goldstein, N6ULU
 Director: Eric Swarz, WA6HHQ
 Director: Rich Chatelain, AB6ZV
 Director: Jim Knochenhauer, K6ITL

The DXer:

Editor: Garry Shapiro, NI6T
 20941 Nez Perce Trail
 Los Gatos, CA 95030
 (408) 353-1118
 (408) 353-1119 (FAX)
 ni6t@ix.netcom.com

Printing, Mailing: Ron Panton, W6VG

DX Ladder: Dave Bernstein, AA6YQ
 Contest Manager: Ed Schuller, WA6CTA
 9-Band Award: John Brand, K6WC
 California Award: Ruben Hughes, WA6AHF
 Historian/archivist: Ron Panton, W6VG
 Records Manager: Ron Panton, W6VG
 Publications Mgr: Ron Panton, W6VG

Club Repeater, W6TI/R

Frequency/offset: 147.36 MHz, +
 Trustee: Bob Vallio, W6RGG
 Comm. Chairman: Eric Swarz, WA6HHQ
 Club simplex: 147.54 MHz (suggested)
 Thurs. Net QTR: 8 pm local time.
 Net Manager: Randy Wright, WB6CUA
 DX News: Dave Pugatch, KI6WF
 Propagation: Al Lotze, W6RQ
 Westlink: Craig Smith, N6ITW
 Swap Shop: Ben Deovlet, W6FDU
 QSL Information: Mac McHenry, W6BSY

W6TI DX Bulletins:

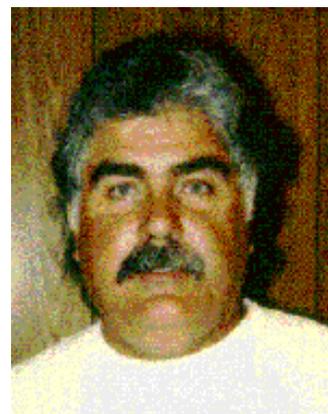
W6TI Station Trustee Bob Vallio, W6RGG, transmits DX information at 0200 UT every Monday (Sunday evening local time) on both 7.016 and 14.002 MHz.

Club address: Box 608
 Menlo Park, CA
 94026-0608

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Board of Directors Meeting

The February Board meeting was held at Brothers Deli in Burlingame and called to order by President Al Burnham, W4RIM at 7:32 PM. Present were W4RIM, WA6HHQ, AB6ZV, K6ITL, NI6T and AA6T.



- The Minutes of the January Board meeting were approved as printed in the February *DXer*.
- Treasurer N6ULU was unable to attend, but his Treasurer's report is printed in the February *DXer*.
- Rich, AB6ZV, presented an outline for the "Member of the Month" program. The program was unanimously approved: the Board seeks someone to administer it.
- W4RIM noted that the 50th Anniversary of the NCDXC is in October, 1996. Preparation for our celebration of this major anniversary must begin soon. The Board seeks a Chairperson for that event.
- The Board will request a status report from the DX Convention Committee. W4RIM will contact K6ANP.
- The Board voted to *retain* the Club Marathon as is. It also discussed the possibility of a special competition for Associate members.
- W4RIM observed that no one has stepped forward to chair the Recruitment/Elmering program. The Board then discussed the many positions that currently need filling. Member participation is the key ingredient for any successful club and a rewarding experience for those individuals who step forward to help.
- W4RIM requested that the mailing deadline for the *DXer* be moved up to no later than the first Friday of the month. This would allow members sufficient notice of meetings and events. *DXer* Editor NI6T agreed.
- Eric, WA6HHQ, presented a member's request for alternative nights for Club meetings. After discussion, the Board agreed that meetings will remain on Friday evenings.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 PM.

—Lloyd Cabral, AA6T, Secretary

General Meeting

The February meeting of the NCDXC was held at the Dunfey Hotel in San Mateo and was called to order by President Al Burnham, W4RIM, at 8:05 PM. Guests this evening included Lou, XYL of W6TEX, Martha, XYL of KK6EK and Terry, KE6QNJ.

- The minutes of the January BoD and general meetings and the Treasurer's report were approved as printed in the February *DXer*.
- W4RIM reminded all that next month's meeting will be held on March 15th in Petaluma. See story on page 1.
- ARRL Pacific Division Director K6WR and Vice-Director W6CF delivered an ARRL news update, commenting on the Vanity Callsign Program and FCC Docket 93.62. The 93.62 Docket is of special interest to amateurs, as it deals with the possible establishment of RF exposure standards.
- Two new Associate members were welcomed into membership—Tom Adler, AB6RG of Los Altos and Daniel Curry, WB6STW of Redwood City.

continued on next page

Point/Counterpoint

Second reading—keep it or kill it?

WB6CUA: “Keep the second reading!”

The NCDXC is a group of amateurs interested in DX. The *club* represents all of its members. No one person should be allowed to have total say on how the club membership should grow. If we eliminate the second reading of a prospective member, then we say the sponsor has sole determination of how our club grows.

The second reading allows the current members of our club to have time to evaluate the character and qualities of its prospective members. It also allows current members a *say* about how the club grows.

We want our membership to grow, but not at the expense of not allowing club members' input. Sponsors submit prospective members to the club. Let the *club* vote in its prospective members. Selfish, *no*—fair, *yes*.

I say that we should keep the bylaws, part 1-103 as currently written.

—Randy Wright, WB6CUA

NI6T: “Flush the second reading!”

The second reading is an artifact of a time when membership in our club was thought to be desired by many but was to be bestowed upon only an elite few. Times change. Today, Amateur Radio encompasses a far greater range of interests than it did fifty years ago, and DXing has become but one sub-hobby among many. Decreasing membership and increasing average age within almost all general and special interest radio clubs point to *survival* as a primary goal of a radio club as we near the millenium. And survival means recruitment of new members.

As with other laws and rules in our society, the *intent* of the second reading must be weighed against its actual *effectiveness*. As Randy indicates, the intent of the second reading was to allow a leisurely and critical evaluation of a candidate—but in practice this just does not happen. Certainly, in the last decade, the second reading has been a bar to membership for almost no one! I understand that one candidate was actually rejected, and another withdrew his application when informed that someone planned to speak against him—while hundreds were admitted to membership during that time. And one might argue that peer pressure—rather than peer rejection—would have been more effective in expiating whatever sins were attributed to the barred candidates.

Randy worries that a candidate's sponsor may be the sole determinant of the candidate's worthiness. But the small number attending a monthly meeting hardly represents scrutiny in depth by the membership at large. It could be argued that that core group of regulars then becomes the sole determinant of suitability. I would more comfortably accept the testimonial of a sponsor knowledgeable of the candidate—and that is, in fact, what we actually do and have been doing for all these years.

I argue that the sponsor testimonial is more than adequate, and that the second reading is an idea whose time has passed.

—Garry Shapiro, NI6T

from preceding page

General Meeting

- The evening's program was a presentation by Don Melcher, N6IPE, the architect and builder of the remote-controlled station at KD6UO. This installation was featured in the January '96 issue of *QST*. Don explained both the hardware and software used to control the station and followed up with a live demonstration. The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 PM.

—Lloyd Cabral, AA6T, Secretary

The 1996 ARRL DX Contest is history! I hope all of you participated, and had fun in the process. Please be sure to send me your summary sheets as soon as possible, for both the CW and SSB portions of the contest, so that I can compile the scores and forward them to ARRL HQ and see how we did against the Southern California clubs.

Given where we are in the solar cycle, there was a lot of DX! I hope that those of you who needed new ones found some on in the contest.

You might take a moment and go over your log sheet. It is always interesting to sit back after the contest and analyze how you did. Maybe you didn't catch a particular opening; perhaps you were able to run on one band better than on another. You will always discover *something* that will help you plan for next year, and will find ways to improve your score.

Since there were no (as in *zero*) responses to the team concept, I will presume that there is no interest in this type of activity out there, and will not include it in future contests.

—Ed Schuller, WA6CTA

Roster Changes

New Members

(FM-full member,

AM-associate member)

Tom Adler, AB6RG (Extra, AM)
P.O. Box 1244
Los Altos, CA 94023
H (415) 493-8406

Daniel Curry, WB6STW (Advanced, AM)
2113 Madison Ave.
Redwood City, CA 94061
H (415) 366-7846

Change of Address

Bill Hamlin, K6UO
627 Marina Circle
Davis, CA 95616
H (916) 759-8570

A Quiet Evening on 160

Danny Hayes, AB6LJ

One night—not long ago—I attempted 160m DXing for only the second time in my not-long ham career. Being new both to CW and Top Band made me very nervous. While I do not recall the DX station’s callsign, I do remember that it was for only my second country on 160m.

the necessary code! I stop screaming only when the code is provided by my understanding wife—who is still recovering from fright—and I shut it off. Whew! All is finally quiet.

Not quite! I realize that my alarm system has automatically called the Sheriff and deputies are on the way. Hell, can this get any worse? *Yes!* I have to call the alarm company immediately, to head off the Sheriff. After frantically scrambling around for the phone number, I find it. The alarm people ask me for my code word so they can cancel the false alarm.

Guess what? I cannot remember the code word! Total frustration now reigns—I do not remember their using this code-word stuff before! So I hang up, with the Sheriff’s men still on the way. I call the owner of the alarm company and ask him what my code word is. At first, he refuses to provide it, but—after I tell him what I will do to him if I have to drive over there—he offers to call and have the false alarm canceled for me. He gives me my code word, too.

Finally, it is over. The deputies turn around in my driveway, and my wife

My inverted-V antenna is still untested in battle, and the spot on the DX cluster raises my pulse rate. I tune to the DX frequency, and am elated to find I can copy him just fine! My SWR is still too high, so I employ my ATU with my amplifier for the first time.

As I key the radio to adjust the tuner, I notice a slight flashing of the LED’s on my packet TNC. Oh well, not to worry! I flip the standby switch and key the amp. As I reach for the load and tune knobs, I notice that lights on several pieces of equipment are flickering. After a few minutes, I make the QSO. Soon after, I notice a very loud noise in my ears—and it is *not* coming from my headphones!

Curious, I remove the headphones. Panic sets in as I realize that my home burglar alarm has gone off. The siren is blaring full-blast inside the house and the even-louder outside bell is clanging just outside my shack’s window! I take off running from the shack to shut the *!@% thing off—and trip over a chair, stubbing my *already*-broken toe. AIEEEE! The pain is excruciating!

I half-run/half-limp to the alarm panel—only to realize that I do not remember

provides an ice pack for my toe, and a couple of Advils for my migraine. I shut everything off and lay back on the bed in my radio room, staring at my radio.

A few months later, the return envelope arrives from the DX station. Dang! After all that—I’m *Not in the Log!*

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March Meeting

8. Average meal price is \$12.

For those seeking to make a small holiday of the excursion, there is:

- golf on Friday—contact Chod Harris, VP2ML, who has reserved noon tee times at the Windsor Golf Course (possibly impacted by the weather).
- a wine tour on Saturday—contact Bruce Butler, W6OSP.

The Best Western Petaluma Inn, (707) 763-0994, is adjacent to Carrow’s, and *might* have a discount—tell them you are with the “radio club.”

Mystery Photo

This photo was snapped at Old Timers Night at the Oakland Radio Club in 1955. There are *at least* three past or present members of NCDXC in the group, including at least two Charter Members. Can you name them?

Answer on page 6

from page 4



Hail to the Best!

Hugh Cassidy, WA6AUD

It is again Spring here on the Western Reaches—it came this year in early February. And QRPers everywhere are hippy-hopping on the freshly-greened hillsides in the warm sun. It is a good time, maybe even the best of times, and the Solar Index is showing signs of edging upward. What DXer might want more?

Who, indeed! Last week we got the answer to our question. Up through the wildflowered slopes of the hill came a QRPer bubbling with the rites of Spring. He was happy, he was anticipatory and he was here. He had some things to talk over. “Did you know that the club announced a chairman for the DXer of the Year Award at the last meeting?” he asked, and we admitted that we had noted it. “And of course you are aware that the award—by the rules—goes to the most outstanding member of the club who has consistently and actively participated in DX and the club’s activities.” We nodded—we had been there before. “And those getting the award must meet strict criteria, such as cooperation in DX efforts, high standards of operating ethics, participation in club activities and in major DX contests, service in and for the ARRL and to the public and things like that.” We nodded again.

It was a sermon that we have been hearing for thirty or more years, one way or another. We thought that by now we had seen the elephant. The QRPer was silent for a brief moment—brief, but long enough for us to start feeling a bit uneasy. When QRPers are silent, they are usually thinking. It is a time to be on guard, for, as Julius once said: “Let me have DXers about me who are fat: sleek-headed DXers such as sleep o’ night. Yon QRPer has a mean and hungry look. He thinks too much: such DXers are dangerous.”

We were thinking of how old Julius would operate CW at 40 wpm on forty meters with a straight key. We wished that he was here now. But in his stead came the Old Timer down the hill, just walking, and not hippy-hopping.

He arrived like Custer at the Little Big Horn—too late to escape. The QRPer insisted on going through his whole act again—the entering questions, the outlines of the DXer of the Year Award—finally finishing by stating that the recipient is announced at the International DX Convention—and not before.

We knew all of that and have many times waited for the great moment of pure but shocked gratification that comes when the name of the honored DXer is announced—when he or she realizes that his accomplishments have merited attention and approval, that he has been singled out and knighted in front of his peers—and the utter disbelief of some unable yet to accept that they have been hailed as the most outstanding member of the club. It was and still always is a touching memory.

What could we say? Nothing, actually. We waited because we knew that something was coming for sure. It was not a long wait. “Tell me,” the QRPer said, “with such extensive criteria for judging the merit of a nominee, where does the Committee find the necessary corroboration of the qualities and accomplishments of a nominee?” We did not have an answer to that one, and mumbled something like “the one nominating a DXer should furnish all the needed corroborating information,” or something like that. Frankly, we did not know the answer. Too late, it was realized that perhaps the QRPer did.

“Tell me something,” he pressed on. “What about Section g2 of the criteria, demanding high standards and compliance with FCC regulations?” Hearing those words, we felt a chill. We also noted that the Old Timer was edging towards the door. But the QRPer had asked the question and was obviously expecting an answer. We were afraid even to try.

“Am I to understand,” the QRPer said, breaking the gritted-teeth impasse, “that no recipient of the DXer of the Year Award has ever run power in excess of the FCC regulations? Or has not ever been questioned for what purpose he needed that big cable running along the wall of his shack and out to the garage? Or why some seemed to have a chronic problem with blown traps? Or even why some antennas

tended to glow on a dark night? Or why a member’s station literally exploded when he inadvertently tuned into a high SWR?” Neither we nor the Old Timer ventured to answer that one.

“I have a doctor’s appointment; I have to get going,” the Old Timer said abruptly, and he was gone—leaving me again worrying about the fairness of men and the goodness of the world. But why did we have to be the one expected to have all the answers? Everyone is alone, but nobody wants to be alone, and especially at a time such as this!

But the QRPer was there and looking at us with a barbed and insistent demand to come back and face the question. There was no escape. “We don’t have the answer to that one,” we had to acknowledge. But that was not enough. “Why then,” the QRPer persisted, “doesn’t the committee put some questions directly to a nominee rather than trying to preserve the facade of a grand but unsuspected surprise? Why not advise a member that he is being considered and ask directly where the criteria might require? Questions like whether the nominee had strictly observed FCC regulations or whether his attainment of the honored 5BDXCC had been considerably helped by judicious use of excessive and illegal power.”

Lets face it: we were stuck and we had to wonder. We again had to remember that an agreement in principle often means a complete refusal to observe or do anything in practice. We were lost. We were—but not the QRPer.

“Think it over,” he ordered. “Tell me, when you make up your mind, if we are only honoring no one’s skill but everyone’s folly, or—to put it another way—are we continuing a system that honors how a DXer might talk more than how he performs?” And, having destroyed my fine Spring day, the QRPer was gone.

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Booby-Trap Terrorists of the Airwaves Laugh at

Law

Ian Burrell, Home Affairs Reporter, BBC

Jerry Bliss, K6SMH provided this disturbing story to The DXer.

There could hardly be a more potent sign of society's descent into madness. Two of post-war Britain's most inoffensive icons—The Laughing Policeman and the Radio Ham—have been transformed into symbols of a bizarre but dangerous brand of terrorism. When the recorded peals of the Laughing Policeman are heard on the amateur airwaves by officials from the Radiocommunications Agency (RCA), which is responsible for stopping unlawful broadcasts, they know that they face physical risk.

Four police forces are investigating attacks on the homes of RCA officials, as well as incidents of booby-trapped explosive devices planted in trees and bushes. They are gathering evidence against members of a secretive group that calls itself the Laughing Policeman Wireless Society, which appears to be dedicated to disrupting the harmless hobby of Britain's 60,000 radio hams, who communicate with each other over the airwaves.

The organisation states in its literature that it is determined to close down all the country's 50 hill-top radio transmitters that law-abiding hams use to relay their long-distance messages. The Birmingham transmitter has already been turned off because obscene and unlawful broadcasts were relayed from it at regular intervals. The authorities are baffled as to what the society's motives are.

The society, whose members identify themselves only by codenames, takes its name from the 1950's song, "The Adventures of the Laughing Policeman," by Charles Penrose. Members broadcast the song over the airwaves when boasting about a successful operation. The RCA, which is responsible for stopping unlawful broadcasts, has obtained copies of the Penrose Gazette, the society's newsletter, in which death threats have been made against inspectors. Cartoons of named investigators have been depicted with their heads on spikes. In one issue a picture of a hangman's noose carried the message: "This space reserved for the radio investigation service."

Government inspectors believe the group was behind the planting of an ex-

plosive device near a radio transmitter at Brill, Buckinghamshire, in September. The equipment was sending out a jamming signal and had been buried on a small island in a lake. It was fitted with a flare which was designed to go off in the face of anyone who disturbed it. The booby trap had a solar panel to recharge its batteries. An army bomb squad was called in to make the device safe.

The RCA, part of the Department of Trade and Industry, said that in recent weeks the Laughing Policeman song had been broadcast to announce that two similar devices were to be planted at transmitters in the New Year. At the same time, there has been a succession of attacks on the homes of its investigators. Paint-stripper was poured over their homes and cars in night-time raids. Police are investigating more than a dozen attacks, seven on RCA officials and the remainder on radio hams who have complained about the organisation's activities. Assistant chief constable John Burbeck, of West Mercia police, who is coordinating the inquiry, said: "We are taking this very seriously. We are concerned there may be a campaign against the enforcement officers of a government agency."

The victim of one recent attack, a senior RCA official in the Midlands, said last week that his family was terrified by the ordeal. "My telephone number is ex-directory but they must have found out where I live by following me home from work," he said. The attackers struck one evening last month, shortly after 11pm, pouring gallons of paint-stripper over the inspector's car, his wife's vehicle and his son's motorcycles. Bricks were thrown through his windows. The repaint bill will total more than 9,000 pounds.

Investigators are examining links between the society and rogue hams who have tried to confuse pilots by broadcasting false messages in the jargon of air traffic controllers. Incidents have been reported at Manchester, Newcastle and Heathrow airports. Others have sent bogus maritime distress signals to coast guards in the northeast of England in an attempt to launch futile rescue missions.

An RCA investigator described the attackers as "lunatics." He said: "their intelligence network is uncanny and up to now they have kept one

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Hail to the Best!

DXing is a rather exotic practice. But is it at all possible that—in the determination to outdo—things might be carried to excess? The QRPer had me thinking about it. We could not shake the sounds of tired voices coming from afar. Whatever we had seen might all be a dream; whatever we had heard was a short tale.

And there we are stuck: right there in a quandary we could have done without. Caught again by an all-purpose QRPer going about his lonely protest.

Mystery Photo

Top row, from right: #1, Mario Chirone, W6DUB; #3, Bud Bane, W6WB. Bottom row, from right: #2, Horace Greer, W6TI.

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FIRST CLASS

